

Culture and one child's genetic abnormality

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A girl that was born with no separation of her eyelids (cryptophthalmos). Eye Clinic, First People's Hospital, Lhasa, Tibet. September, 1997.

We first saw this child in 1995 and again in 1997, read the textbooks about her problem, and consulted famous eye plastic surgeons. We learned that it's impossible to make her eyes anything close to normal and unlikely that we could permanently improve her vision much. We debated trying to improve one eye, but were dissuaded by Dr Palden, a Tibetan doctor. He explained that with her appearance, she would have a secure life as a beggar and we'd destroy that if we operated.

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